**INTENSIVE WRITING**

**2014-2015**

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Welcome to Intensive Writing! While it is usually considered inappropriate to define something by what it isn’t, defining this course by what it isn’t, might actually help. This is not a regular English class in which students learn to read, write and speak publicly. This is not a Creative Writing class in which students typically craft poems, short stories or plays.

So, what is this course, then? In this course, students will learn the various conventions (rules of writing) for a variety of purposes, ranging from letters and emails to SAT writing prompts. The challenged or emerging writer learns to differentiate between the various modes of writing and becomes proficient in writing for communication.

All writing makes the thoughts of the writer visible. In order to know what the writers in this class are thinking, we will practice the art of putting the pen to the paper or the fingers to the keyboard. The more we write, the better we get. Along the way, we will also focus on the mechanics of writing such as grammar and punctuation rules. We will build our active working vocabularies.

In addition, we will read and be read to. What does this have to do with writing? Everything… In order to be a better writer, we must experience great writing. One simply cannot know what the writing standards are, if one does not read.

We will use the following books as our texts, in addition to a variety of news articles, famous letters and other examples of great writing:

King, Stephen. *On Writing*.

Pelecanos, George. *The Cut*.

Sedaris, David. *Me talk pretty one day*.

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.*

Grading:

First of all, this class has no homework and no tests/quizzes. While this may sound like a dream come true for some students, it means that classtime must be used well and the standards are high. The reason for the “no homework” rule has to do with the writing process. I simply must see what you do in the writing process and be available for feedback while you write. We will conference often in class. We have no tests/quizzes because the major writing assignments are our tests/quizzes.

This class uses a portfolio system of grading. Writing is a long and complicated process. Too often, challenged writers believe that they must produce something perfect on the first try. NO GREAT WRITER DOES THIS! (shouting on purpose) Thus, students will maintain a portfolio using google docs in which they will go through multiple drafts for each major writing assignment. Students will receive a rubric clearly outlining the requirements for a great piece of writing. Students will have multiple opportunities to improve a piece of writing based on feedback, before deciding that it should be placed in the permanent portfolio, at which time it will receive a final grade.

In addition, students will maintain a notebook which they will keep in class. In this book, we will keep notes, record new vocabulary words, and occasionally respond to prompts. The notebook will remain in class.

The significant components of this course, then, are as follows:

Major Writing Assignments 40%

Notebook 20%

Reading 20%

SAT prompts 20%